

Foundations



**Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers
and Strategies for Guiding Their Success**



Public Schools of North Carolina

State Board of Education
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Department of Public Instruction
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Early Learning Standards for North Carolina
Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding
Their Success

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Exceptional Children's Preschool Program
N.C. Department of Public Instruction

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Dear Early Childhood Professionals,

While early childhood has long been an exciting and dynamic field, only in recent years has it begun to receive the attention it deserves. The body of knowledge describing how young children learn has grown rapidly, along with an understanding of the benefits of high-quality early childhood programs. With this increased attention, teachers of young children are expected to know and to do more than ever before.

With all of this in mind, the Department of Public Instruction invited representatives from a variety of early childhood professions to participate in the development of North Carolina's first Early Learning Standards. After many months of thoughtful collaboration, the task force now proudly presents the fruit of its work: *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success*.

The task force worked diligently to create standards that would provide a common vision for North Carolina's early childhood programs and reflect the diversity of the children we serve. It is our hope that this publication will strengthen the relationships among these programs and improve the care and education of North Carolina's preschoolers.

Foundations is dedicated to everyone who serves North Carolina's preschoolers. Through your work, you are building a foundation for the future. Let's do all in our power to ensure that it is a bright one!

Sincerely,

Patricia N. Willoughby

Acknowledgments

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Grateful thanks as well to the members of the Early Learning Standards Task Force, listed here, for the invaluable contribution of their knowledge, expertise, and support.

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About this publication

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction convened an esteemed committee of early childhood educators and parents from across the state to work on this document. During their many months of work, members of the group studied research, looked at other state standards, and considered policy statements from national organizations to develop the initial draft of the Widely Held Expectations.

To ensure consistency, they examined the North Carolina Kindergarten Standard Course of Study and various curricula that are widely used in North Carolina. Additionally, they reviewed all appropriate research literature to make sure the expectations were inclusive of children from a variety of circumstances and with differing levels of ability.

The committee then invited feedback on the Widely Held Expectations in a variety of ways. Comments from the public were gathered during a series of eight focus groups held across the state. Participants included members of the SUCCESS Network and educators from public schools, Head Start, More at Four, Smart Start, private child-care programs, and colleges and universities.

The document was also posted on the Department of Public Instruction website. Expert reviewers within North Carolina and across the country were asked to provide their thoughts and guidance. The committee thanks the many friends of early education who so generously aided in the development of this book.

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